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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000208

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W, AF/EX AND INR/AA
STATE PASS FOR USAID/AFR/WA, AFR/SD, AND EGAT MOTT
STATE PASS TO USTR-AGAMA
GABARONE FOR PHIL DROUIN
DOC FOR 3317/ITA/OA/KBURRESS AND 3130/USFC/OIO/ANESA/DHARRIS
TREASURY FOR PETERS AND HALL
RHMFIUU/COMUSNAVEUR NAPLES IT FOR ANAGGIAR
RHPHGB/COMUSNAVEUR NAPLES IT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/28/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KCOR](#) [KCRM](#) [EPET](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: NONVIOLENCE TRAINING FOR ENTIRE COMMUNITY
RELATIONS

Classified By: Consul General Donna Blair, Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

11. (C) Summary: The National Chairman of the Foundation for Ethnic Harmony in Nigerian (FEHN), Allen Onyema, told Pol-EconOff on April 6, that Shell oil company has engaged FEHN to improve community relations in 22 communities and FEHN has also been approached by ExxonMobil about similar projects. FEHN seeks to educate community leaders, including women and youth, about the nonviolent approach to problems, stressing dialogue, negotiation and respect for other points of view. Onyema claimed the utility of the approach was proved when communities in Abia State, which had received training from FEHN, chased away militants that wanted to set up camps nearby. Elements in the Rivers State government recently tried to co-opt FEHN for their personal purposes, but FEHN avoided involvement in the scheme. The community approach adopted by FEHN appears promising, but sustainability is questionable. End Summary.

12. (SBU) According the National Chairman of FEHN, Allen Onyema, Shell oil company engaged FEHN to improve community relations in 22 communities in the Niger Delta. FEHN organizes workshops for traditional rulers, community women and youth leaders, which teach the importance of civil behavior and nonviolence. FEHN educates communities about the need to negotiate, not just make demands, and emphasizes that all parties to a conflict have legitimate interests that need to be identified and addressed. Onyema pointed out that communities tend to treat the International Oil Companies (IOCs) as if they were government organs, holding the IOCs responsible for the delivery of services such as power, clean water, health care and educational facilities. FEHN seeks to redress this misperception by educating residents on the role of IOCs as profit-making concerns and pointing out that infrastructure and social services are the responsibility of the Nigerian government.

13. (SBU) Shell is sufficiently convinced of the benefits of these FEHN workshops to plan an expansion of FEHN's mandate

to the Forcados region in Delta State. In addition, ExxonMobil recently approached FEHN about conducting community liaison work in communities in which ExxonMobil is present. According to Onyema, the efficacy of FEHN's methods was demonstrated when militants tried to locate their camps in some communities in Abia State; the communities, which had received FEHN training, chased the militants away. However, he warned, the long-term impact of FEHN training will be in jeopardy unless he can get enough people trained to remain in the communities reinforcing the principles taught. He indicated that FEHN needed substantially greater resources to ensure sustainability of its work; FEHN is currently negotiating with Shell about more financial support.

¶4. (C) Onyema told Pol-EconOff that earlier this year he was approached by the Rivers State government about starting nonviolence training for youths from Rivers State who renounce violence. According to Onyema, however, the State expected FEHN to "cooperate" with an organization that had just been founded by someone "close to the governor." This organization had absolutely no experience or expertise and was probably a scam, Onyema alleged. In consequence, FEHN refused the contract under these conditions, but Onyema noted that on the River State government website the State falsely claims to have engaged FEHN.

¶5. (C) Comment: Expanding FEHN's training from violent youth to entire communities is a positive step, although it is hard to see how two-day workshops can really transform ingrained mentalities. Onyema's reference to the need for more training and a continuous presence in communities is telling. Post

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believes fundamental changes in attitudes will only be possible if communities receive sustained training and counseling. End Comment.
BLAIR